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## Modern Home, Environment, and Gender : Built, Planned, and Lived Spaces in Post-war Finland

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Routledge

2018

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Saarikangas , K & Horelli , L 2018 , Modern Home, Environment, and Gender : Built, Planned, and Lived Spaces in Post-war Finland . in A Staub (ed.) , The Routledge Companion to Modernity, Space and gender . Routledge , New York , pp. 41-66 .

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**Abstract:** While not obvious at first sight, gender is a key issue in the formation of the modern Nordic welfare state and in the creation of Finland's modern dwelling, the People's Home. This chapter analyzes the relationship between gender and modernity in the context of Finnish and Nordic post–World War II housing, focusing on the interrelationship between planning ideals and homes as lived spaces. The chapter explores modernized housing as set in pristine “forest suburbs,” as well as cohousing that provides a supportive infrastructure allowing both men and women to integrate work with domestic life, empowering both sexes and allowing for a more equal gender construct.

### 3

## Modern Home, Environment, and Gender

### Built, Planned, and Lived Spaces in Post-war Finland

**Kirsi Saarikangas and Liisa Horelli**

“Look children, how wonderful! An apartment with running water, private toilet, and balcony!” We had just moved in. I remember how my ecstatic mother almost flew across the empty living room of our new home onto the sunny balcony holding my little sister in her arms. **1**

This is the way a man recalled his new childhood home of the early 1950s in the late 1990s, when more than 300 suburbanites recorded their written memories of suburban living in the Helsinki region from the 1950s to the 1970s. **2** Housing in Finland underwent a major change after World War II. New homes and their modern facilities revolutionized everyday life and held out optimistic promises of a better future. **3** The narrators repeatedly contrasted the luxuries of new spacious apartments with their previous inadequate dwellings. Modern conveniences such as piped water, indoor toilets, shining bathrooms, standardized kitchen fittings, and balconies symbolized the change and aroused feelings of joy and happiness.

Both landscape and people were on the move as hundreds of thousands of new dwellings were constructed, from remote rural settlements to urban centers, and hundreds of thousands of people relocated to new home districts. The war had exacerbated the already existing urban housing shortage, as the economic recession had stopped almost all housing construction in the mid-1930s. Karelian refugees, more than 400,000 people (one-eighth of the total Finnish

population) from the territories ceded to the Soviet Union, had to be resettled, and ex-servicemen, numerous new families established after the war, and the growing urban population needed new homes.

The emergence of new kinds of domestic and urban spaces fundamentally changed the Finnish landscape, housing customs, and the details of daily life affecting the space, time, and bodies of inhabitants. Post-war housing construction led to the wholesale modernization of Finnish housing. The modernist principles of spatial differentiation and the urban middle-class ideals of habitation that had emerged since the late 1920s were applied both indoors and outdoors. The post-war (re)construction of housing had two solutions. The reconstruction began in the countryside. Throughout the 1940s and early 1950s, the one-and-a-half-story standardized wooden one-family houses, nicknamed “veterans’ houses,” provided the main solution for new homes both in rural areas and population centers. The volume of urban construction only caught up with rural levels in 1956.<sup>4</sup> Until the 1970s, the principal solution for urban habitation was the suburban apartment close to nature (Figure 3.1).

**[Insert Figure 3.1 Here]**

**Figure 3.1** Moving Into a New Home in Pohjois-Haaga (Tolarintie 3), Helsinki

Photo: K-G. Roos, 1956–1959; courtesy of The Finnish Museum of Photography.

The post-war changes in housing coincided with the rapid industrialization, urbanization, and modernization of Finnish society. In a few decades, the ratio of people who lived in rural areas and cities was turned on its head. At the end of World War II, almost 70% of the population resided in the countryside and lived off the forest and land, but by 1980, 70% lived in the cities and their new suburbs, and only 13% were directly employed in agriculture and

forestry. The period of most intense urbanization occurred between 1965 and 1975. During the so-called years of great migration, masses of people moved from the northern and eastern countryside to new homes in the urban centers of southern Finland and abroad to Sweden. More decent and affordable housing had to be built fast.<sup>5</sup> The suburban locale—and its homogeneous dwelling type—rapidly became the new national landscape of modern Finland.

If not obvious at first sight, gender was a key issue in the formation of a new spatial order of housing, from the spatial rearrangements of dwellings and housing areas to urban space as a whole. The dwelling took on an increasing importance as an instrument for improving everyday life in the setting up of a modern welfare state, the People's Home, in Finland and other Nordic countries, most notably in Sweden. The post-war housing construction turned the new architectural aesthetics into a centrally managed ethical, hygienic, and social project. New dwellings and suburbs epitomized the ideal spatial organization of post-war gender relations. They were planned according to the principles of the unity of space and function and for the ideal average inhabitants, that is, the nuclear—and by definition heterosexual—family, with a mother, father, and children. The spatial organization of new homes both reflected and produced the ideal nuclear family mode of living and the concomitant gendered division of labor.<sup>6</sup> Home and society formed a continuum in which both genders had their tasks along the lines of the dichotomous citizenship: the wife working at home and the husband outside the home.<sup>7</sup> The domestic environment as a whole, from dwellings to suburbs, was identified as women's and children's spheres of activities, and was considered to have a direct influence on their lives. Therefore, whereas women's activities within domestic space were valued, and attention was paid to the areas that had previously received only little architectural attention, the spatial

organization of the functionally differentiated dwelling and town spaces alike were based on strict and polarized views of genders.

This chapter offers a historical review of the relations, negotiations, and tensions between modern Finnish housing and gender. Its particular focus is on the interrelationships of built, planned, and lived spaces. The chapter concentrates on housing from the 1940s to the 1970s—the decades dominated by the modern housing ideal. It discusses briefly the development of new dwelling ideals during the 1920s and 1930s, and presents rare feminist alternatives to challenge modern housing and town planning ideals in the late twentieth century. What conceptions of genders did planning rely on and generate? What gendered habits did spatial arrangements support or interfere with? Gendered spatial habits are formed in the reciprocity of built space, inhabitants, cultural conceptions, and negotiations in embodied spatial practices and routines such as habitation and homemaking, “in performing basic activities of life.”<sup>8</sup> As silent knowledge stratified in the body, gendered habits are available for people to use.<sup>9</sup>

Our discussion combines the analyses of built spaces, discourses of planning, and embodied inhabited spaces. Our aim is not to demonstrate that the viewpoints of either planners, housing discussions, or inhabitants are right or wrong. Rather, the combination of various and sometimes contradictory perspectives offer a more nuanced view of the gendered dimensions of domestic spaces in post-war Finland. Moreover, these positions are not innocent or homogeneous, but located and multifaceted. Instead of the dichotomy between active planners as creators of the built environment, and passive users for whom the environment is planned, we suggest that the shaping of the environment and its meanings is a much more complex process.

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## Modernisms, Modernizations, and Modernities

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The relationship between gender and modern domestic spaces is tense and ambiguous. Urban public spaces, and the modern metropolis in particular, have often been depicted as paradigmatic spaces of modernity, whereas domestic and suburban environments have been regarded as refuges from or antitheses of modernity, as Judy Giles has pointed out.<sup>10</sup> Our chapter suggests instead that whereas the planning of new domestic environments in Finland was based on limited views of gender and family, such environments were crucial spaces for the experiences of modern life and for the formation of modern Finnish society and its gender relations. Numerous feminists discussing domestic and suburban spaces have pointed out that the emphasis on ephemeral modernity has neglected the everyday and suburban life as repetitious, not modern, passive, and feminine. As Rita Felski states: “The vocabulary of modernity is a vocabulary of anti-home.”<sup>11</sup> The bias against spaces and practices associated with women has resulted in making natural the tie between domesticity and women, and the undervaluation of home and the practices culturally coded as feminine.<sup>12</sup> However, home and domestic spaces have been very much the focus of modernist architects. Moreover, even if the agency of modernism has been gendered male, women’s agency from planning to practices of housing has been crucial in the shaping of new housing environments.<sup>13</sup> Despite the pivotal position of housing in the modern architectural movement, research on relations of gender, space, and modern dwelling was curiously underdeveloped until the late twentieth century.<sup>14</sup>

Interrelationships between modernity, gender, and space entered feminist discussion in the 1980s. Attention was first focused on urban space and the polarization of public, urban spaces and private, domestic spaces in the processes of industrialization and modernization along the lines of cultural conceptions of masculinity and femininity, and the supposed exclusion of women from public, urban spaces and their representations.<sup>15</sup> Since the 1990s, however,

feminist researchers have argued that the polarization of spheres “was articulated much more clearly at the level of ideology than it was on the ground.”<sup>16</sup> The division of modern, masculine, public, urban space and not-modern, feminine, private, domestic space is oversimplified and far from rigid.<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Wilson has argued that despite its disadvantages, urban life “emancipated women more than rural life or suburban domesticity”<sup>18</sup> but valued urban spaces over domestic or suburban spaces. Feminist studies on domestic violence have demonstrated that in the terms of sexual and/or physical violence, private homes are not safe havens, but are often more dangerous spaces for women than public urban spaces.<sup>19</sup> Instead of an unambiguous and enclosed private space, home is an open and dynamic process of social relations, constructed in the interaction with the world outside.<sup>20</sup> Further, since the early 2000s, feminist scholars have challenged pathologized views of suburbia by more multifaceted approaches to the suburbs as both physical, built spaces and embodied, lived spaces.<sup>21</sup>

The “spatial turn” in the humanities and social sciences since the 1980s has brought a spatial perspective to buildings, and notable changes in the understanding of built environments and their formation of meanings. Together with feminist approaches, it has broadened the scope of architectural research towards the emergence of meanings of built space, spatial practices, and built spaces as complex, dynamic, and multidimensional processes. Instead of two- or three-dimensional physical constructions and points of fixed meaning, built spaces are approached as produced, represented, and practiced spaces. Embodied, lived spaces are formed in the encounters between inhabitants, environment, cultural conventions, and social relations, in a constant cycle of production and reproduction of space and its meanings in use, allowing for heterogeneous spatial practices and the agency of inhabitants.<sup>22</sup>



“Modern,” “modernity,” “modernization,” and “modernism” are slippery notions, and when compounded with local variations, each can take on more than one meaning. Here, we use them as descriptive terms referring to the historical epoch of discussions about the “new dwelling” and construction of new housing, while at the same time the changes in the then contemporary housing and habitation are the objects of our analyses. According to Marshall Berman, modernity refers to the experiential level, while modernization denotes the complex historical, geographical, social, and economic processes that started with industrialization and urbanization. This distinction has been deployed by Giles, Heynen, and others.<sup>23</sup> The socio-spatial processes of modernization manifested in the improvement and construction of housing and infrastructure (street lighting, water supply, sewage), new domestic technologies, transport, and green areas, are discussed by Eda Acara in this volume. The most intense period of modernization, which Maria Kaika has called “the heroic moment of modernity’s Promethean project,” took place in the Western world from the late nineteenth century through the first three quarters of the twentieth century, with local variations.<sup>24</sup> “Modernism” in turn designates the new artistic and architectural ideals and programmatic visions for social change and progress since the late nineteenth century, collectively referred to in architecture as the Modern Movement, and called “Functionalism” in the Nordic countries.<sup>25</sup> Finally, “modernity” refers to the cultural negotiations and the experiences of space and time. The sense of modernity as the sense of newness was expressed both in the planning discussions and inhabitants’ accounts of post-war habitation. According to Berman, the conflict with tradition and the dichotomy of the “now” and “then” and the “sense of living in two worlds simultaneously”—the radically changed new world and preceding old world—characterizes the experiences of modernity.<sup>26</sup> Or, as Alan

O'Shea states, the sense of modernity is "the practical negotiation of one's life and one's identity within a complex and fast-changing world."<sup>27</sup>

The pursuit of improving people's lives through the improvement of their living environments brought housing to the center of international architectural modernism, and was intrinsically connected with the architectural and social planning of post-war Finnish society. The self-conscious aim of Western architectural modernism was to leave behind the housing modes of the past and create a dwelling that suited both the transformed society and its new lifestyles—spatially differentiated minimal dwelling—and was universally applicable: up-to-date and timeless at once. Discussions advocating the "new dwelling" simultaneously both defined and created the idea of the new dwelling and its supposed residents. The expressions used to present new Functionalist dwelling ideals in Finland included "current," "new," "novel," "up-to-date," "practical," and "functional," and were more common in the period from the 1920s to the 1950s than the term "modern."<sup>28</sup> Enhanced by the growing international fame of Finnish architecture and design in the 1950s, the narrative of heroic modernism and modern idiom took on a national flavor.<sup>29</sup>

From the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, housing reformers underlined the connections between the qualities of the housing environment and the physical and psychological health and morals of the inhabitants, using environmental deterministic tones. The idea of the "curative dwelling" was linked with the idea of the "curable city." The efforts to maximize sunlight and fresh air indoors and greenery outdoors were manifested in the new kind of open urban structure that replaced the dense urban layout with houses sparsely arranged in the landscape.<sup>30</sup> With its emphasis on fresh air, greenery, and sunshine, the creation of the modern housing environment has been depicted as "a gigantic ventilation project" and sanitation of a

“bacteriological city.”<sup>31</sup> The late nineteenth and early twentieth century efforts to create a new healthy urban environment concentrated on bringing nature to the cities in the form of public greenery (parks, leafy boulevards) and open courtyard housing blocks. After World War II, urban habitation was increasingly and paradoxically relocated closer to nature outside the existing urban structure (garden cities, suburbs). In the form of electricity and piped water provided in the modern homes, elements of nature became tamed and controlled commodities, and gradually changed from being wonders to becoming self-evident in modern habitation.<sup>32</sup>

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## Setting the Scene: Practical and Hygienic Dwellings of the 1920s and 1930s

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In the international exchange of ideas, the efficient and hygienic, spatially differentiated modern home was defined architecturally largely in the 1920s and 1930s. Due to the economic recession of that period, however, social housing reform in Finland was realized in actual housing construction only after World War II. In Finland’s post-war era, a modern, uniform type of family apartment that was seen as classless, yet based on urban middle-class housing ideals, gradually replaced the previous variety of housing for different social strata, becoming an almost unquestionable dwelling-type for decades. According to the minimal standards defined at the second CIAM (International Congress of Modern Architecture) in Frankfurt (nicknamed the *Existenzminimum* or minimum needed for existence) and the Functionalist ideals of the unity of space and function, the fundamental functions of a dwelling, regarded as biological needs, were defined as rest, household work, and family socializing. The dwelling was redefined as private space, in contrast with the previous functions of the bourgeois home as a semipublic space for

household activities, representation, and work. The reproductive home was pared down to three carefully oriented rooms of different sizes (to maximize sunshine): a smallish bedroom for sleep and intimacy (sexuality was never directly mentioned), a small kitchen for cooking, and a larger living room for family life, replacing the more or less similar sized rooms of current dwellings. All other functions and non-familial social life were located outside privatized apartments. The new apartment was supposed to be a place of rest for the husband and a place of work for the wife.<sup>33</sup>

Middle-class professionals connected the changes in housing, middle-class households, and women's position with each other, showing more interest than before in practical, efficient homes and kitchens. The number of urban, middle-class women working for wages outside the home expanded, and simultaneously the growing middle class could no longer afford domestic servants. Architect Alvar Aalto wrote in 1930: "The emancipation of women from subordinated position to working companion both in work and home life sets new demands for housing planning."<sup>34</sup> A practical kitchen would help liberate women to work outside the home and allow time for recreation.

The rationalization of household work was expressed in two ways: collective organization outside private apartments and, as the main solution, the rearrangement of the kitchen within the apartment. Rare examples of collective housing included central-kitchen apartment buildings built in the late 1910s and 1920s in Finland's largest towns, particularly in the new middle-class housing district Töölö in Helsinki, largely by a single entrepreneur, master builder Leuto A. Pajunen. Such houses allowed residents to purchase prepared food to eat in the canteen, or to be delivered to one's flat via a dumbwaiter. The one-kitchen houses were designated as alternatives for modern, urban, middle-class families and young couples; some of

the buildings were for women only. The aim was to make life easier for women with jobs. <sup>35</sup>

After World War II, *Naisten Huoltosäätiö* (Support Foundation of Finnish Women) built *White Lady* (1951), a collective apartment complex for former members of the women's military auxiliary and their families, as well as single mothers. The complex included a common kitchen, dining hall, laundry, nursery, sauna, and swimming pool—and it featured the first restaurant women were allowed to enter without a male companion. Before the various cohousing solutions of the early twenty-first century, collective housing never gained the same popularity in Finland as it did in neighboring Sweden, where Alva Myrdal, together with the radical architect Sven Markelius, shaped solutions for collective apartment buildings in the 1930s. <sup>36</sup> The collective organization of housework and care transformed the relations between women of different social classes more than it transformed the gender relations within the family, by outsourcing parts of the housework (cooking, dishwashing, buying, and storing food) to paid employees who were usually female.

The practical and hygienic kitchen within the dwelling became the main answer to arranging household work. Several women architects, interior designers, domestic scientists, women's organizations, and women's magazines carried out systematic research on housework, disseminated new radical housekeeping ideals, and developed patterns for kitchen furniture along the ideals of international, mainly Swedish and German, housing modernizers. The aim of practical household feminists or material feminists, as Dolores Hayden characterizes them, <sup>37</sup> was to elevate the status of housework by professionalizing it, and to find labor-saving arrangements for domestic space and daily routines, “that would save the mother from becoming solely a household-mother,” as expressed by architect Signe Lagerborg-Stenius at the 1921 Women's Housing Convention, where professionals outlined ideal housing solutions from

women's perspectives.<sup>38</sup> Conceptually, the home, kitchen, and women were closely connected, beginning with the planning of the kitchen for its projected users and daily practices. Following the epoch's notion of a complementary, gendered division of labor, household feminists articulated two novel options of feminine identity for a new, modern generation of women: either a skillful, active housewife or a self-supporting, independent woman.<sup>39</sup> The efforts to professionalize housework demonstrated an ambivalence towards domestic labor by simultaneously valuing it and regarding it as repetitive, monotonous, and requiring little imagination.<sup>40</sup>

Kitchens rapidly underwent drastic changes, from their overall planning down to the details. New rationalized laboratory-kitchen designs—regarded not as “the caprice of fashion, but the demand of the era”<sup>41</sup>—were based on systematic time-and-motion studies and the placement of kitchen furniture to save steps and movement, akin to procedures developed for repetitive assembly line work. According to the demands of hygiene, cooking was separated from sleeping and other domestic activities.<sup>42</sup>

The concern for a practical and healthy living environment generated a new kind of interest in domestic space. Trained architects began to design small dwellings, which were previously outside the scope of architecture. Although women were particularly active in shaping the new kitchens, male architects also began to address problems around domestic space according to the international ideals of an up-to-date minimal dwelling. Detailed attention was paid to rooms that had previously received little architectural consideration: the kitchen, bedroom, nursery, bathroom, toilet, and balcony. The conception of architecture's domain expanded from considering the aesthetic organization of space to covering the wider physical environment and its effects on inhabitants' bodies and minds. As a source of physical and moral

health, hygienic, practical dwellings were regarded as vehicles for the sanitary, social, and aesthetic education of citizens as well as presenting a precondition for a better future.<sup>43</sup> Public and private intersected in the modern dwelling. The creation of new dwellings was linked to the concern for the smallest details of everyday life, which turned the private realm of the home into a public issue. Dwellings became simultaneously both more private and objects of intense public discussion, guidance, and control.<sup>44</sup> The publicity of the private is indeed a distinguishing feature of the modern dwelling, as Beatriz Colomina has suggested.<sup>45</sup> Despite the increased privacy, and the rooms reserved solely for familial functions, the modern home was not an enclosed private space. The home extended beyond its physical borders. And vice versa, even when at home, inhabitants were constantly relating to the surrounding world and its normative strategies and cultural agreements that filtered into the dwelling.<sup>46</sup>

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## **Rural Functionalism: Type-Planned Veterans' Houses of the 1940s and 1950s**

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The reconstruction process began in rural areas in the 1940s in the form of the so-called veterans' houses: one-and-a-half-story, wooden, standardized, one-family houses. Throughout the 1940s and early 1950s, most new housing in Finland (70%) was constructed in rural areas. Numerous single-family neighborhoods of "veterans' houses" were also built on the outskirts of towns. The post-war housing construction was largely regulated by the state and municipalities. State-subsidized loans and accompanying building regulations covered 70% of Finnish housing construction during the 1940s and 1950s, whereas privately financed housebuilding increased from the 1960s on. Based on the Land Acquisition Act of 1945, the state established about

100,000 new small holdings in the countryside and about 75,000 residential buildings were built.<sup>47</sup>

The design and construction of these houses represents a unique Finnish permutation of international modernism. It was a combination of national guidance, centralized planning, and self-help. The government's settlement policy regulated the entire process from housing plans to actual construction: the state provided loans and a plot of land, while the residents themselves built their homes using prefabricated materials and type-plans designed by architects. For residents crippled by the war, new homes held optimistic promises of the future.

The construction of houses led to the comprehensive rationalization of the Finnish construction industry and efficiently spread modern housing models to the Finnish countryside. It extended architectural planning to rural building that had previously been dominated by the tradition of self-help, separating planners from users. The plans, in the form of standardized models or type-plans designed by architects, were the prerequisite for state loans. Type-plans also included drawings for cowsheds, saunas, and other outdoor buildings. Most often, personal hygiene took place in saunas, as many houses built in remote rural areas lacked piped water until the 1970s. A number of organizations, and both female and male professionals, participated in the design and production of houses, from the Reconstruction Office of the Finnish Association of Architects (established in 1942) to prefabrication companies and public works departments in municipalities. Despite numerous planners, the homogeneous idiom of houses developed quickly. Houses played a crucial role in the development of construction standards, from the components and details of buildings to entire type-planned houses. The Building Information File—a continuously revised and expanded collection of construction norms and standards—was established in 1942. Along with the standardization of building components, they accelerated the



reconstruction process and made the previously unattainable ideal of the one-family house available to the masses. <sup>48</sup>

Houses are curious hybrids that merge modern idiom, spatial organization, and construction techniques with traditions and materials of rural habitation—an example of critical regionalism as discussed by Kenneth Frampton. <sup>49</sup> Light colors, freely placed windows, modest appearance, and the renunciation of everything “superfluous,” combined the practical and rational aims of international modernism with regional, rural traditions of wooden houses with a gable roof (Figure 3.2).

**[Insert Figure 3.2 Here]**

**Figure 3.2** Veterans’ Houses From the 1940s in Western Pakila, Helsinki

Photo: Sirkka Valanto, 1971. Courtesy of Helsinki City Museum.

The interiors of houses were divided into a separate kitchen, a bedroom, and a living room of almost equal size on the ground floor. Two more bedrooms were often added later in the attic, or attic rooms could be sublet as another household. The development of kitchen standards was an integral part of house planning, and such standards always included plans for practical kitchen fittings. Female architects (Märta Blomstedt, Elsi Borg, Eva Kuhlefeldt-Ekelund) designed preliminary standards in 1942, and the Reconstruction Office collaborated with the new Department of Home Economics (1943) at the Work Efficiency Institute, and published the first standards for kitchen fittings (25 cards in the Building Information File) in 1945. They were based on the ergonomic studies of the measurements and placement of furniture in rural kitchens. The measurements for the standards were self-evidently based on the average bodily dimensions of Finnish women, who were thus represented as the chief actors in the kitchen. <sup>50</sup>

The “rural functionalism” of houses<sup>51</sup> was most clearly manifested in their particular combination of the Functionalist spatial differentiation of almost equal-sized rooms and largish, multipurpose kitchens. The practical kitchens of veterans’ houses deviated from the Frankfurt-type laboratory kitchen ideal (developed by German architect Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky in the 1920s) and were always large enough to accommodate a dining table, recalling the rural traditions of a multipurpose room. Indeed, the small laboratory kitchen never gained popularity in Finland. Inhabitants resisted the new laboratory kitchens because the very separation of cooking and dining went against ingrained customs of habitation. They fitted the dining table into the tiny space of the kitchen, and they even took turns eating there. Domestic scientists and designers complained that the modern kitchen was “so small that you can hardly turn around in it.”<sup>52</sup> While the new urban and suburban dwellings accentuated the kitchen–family room axis, the connection between the kitchen and bedroom was typical in the type-planned houses. The kitchen communicated with the bedroom but not with the living room. Planners argued that the location of the bedroom next to the kitchen would save daily steps for mothers while she could keep an eye on children sleeping or playing in the bedroom, and that mothers would thus more easily enjoy close relations with their children.<sup>53</sup> The largish multipurpose kitchen served as the place for daily family socializing and was large enough for small children to play in or to do schoolwork. However, children’s activities mostly took place outdoors. The more separately located living room preserved the parlor-like semipublic features of a rarely used “better room”—a tradition of rural and urban working-class housing that had been strongly criticized by Finnish and European housing reformers since the early twentieth century. Special efforts were made to separate sleeping from cooking, whereas residents often preferred to conserve a room distinguished from the messiness of everyday life.<sup>54</sup>

### 3 Modern Home, Environment, and Gender

Type-planned houses were planned with the ideal of the average nuclear family in mind. The spatial organization of houses was based on a gendered division of labor and emphasized the home as the realm of active, practical housewives. The focus of architectural planning shifted from aesthetics to practice, from the man's leisure to the woman's work, from family rooms to the kitchen. The kitchen—perceived as the housewife's working place—was presented as the most important room in the house: it was the hub around which the entire home revolved. For the husband, home was the place of rest: he had his place in constructing the house and clearing and cultivating the land (Figure 3.3).

**[Insert Figure 3.3 Here]**

**Figure 3.3** Reconstruction After the Winter War, Spring 1940

Photo: Pekka Kyytinen. Courtesy of The National Board of Antiquities.

The analysis of housing ideals stresses the context of planning. However, construction work often continued when residents moved in. Habitation extended beyond the walls of the house to the yards and surroundings. Over half of the houses were constructed on small holdings in rural areas, and outdoor farming activities were a crucial part of habitation. Women worked in the fields and participated in construction work. On the outskirts of towns, residential plots were quite large: subsistence agriculture, fruit trees, and berry bushes were important aspects of habitation, particularly after the war, and continued rural lifestyles in an urban context. Moreover, even if the planning of houses was based on the ideal nuclear family, many inhabitants lived in other arrangements, including war widows with their children. Often, two households lived on separate floors of veterans' houses. Large, almost even-sized rooms also

allowed for flexible usage. In the practices of habitation, the living room might have served as another bedroom, with a multipurpose kitchen as a family room. <sup>55</sup>

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## Healthy Living Close to Nature: Suburban Environments From the 1950s to the 1970s

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The focus of housing construction shifted from rural to urban areas in the 1950s. From the 1950s to the 1970s, dwellings in new suburbs were the main solution for the construction of new homes, and the suburbs became homes for the vast majority of the Finnish population. In the post-war decades, housing construction was the most important public building project, complemented by schools and churches. It was speeded up and regulated by a new system of state-subsidized housing loans, the ARAVA system, introduced in 1949. <sup>56</sup> At the beginning of the twenty-first century, a quarter of the population lived in suburbs. Many, therefore, experienced the pleasures of modern housing in the suburbs rather than in the cities.

The ideal of healthy living close to nature was a leitmotif of housing planning. It directed housing construction as a whole to the new suburbs and visibly affected the urban morphology. Built amid pristine natural settings, the new forest suburbs epitomized the aesthetic and social ideals of open space and healthy living close to nature. On the basis of functionality and orientation, the urban space as a whole was reorganized. The combination of different kinds of low- and middle-rise multifamily buildings that were freely arranged in the landscape replaced the dense urban layouts. The functions of urban life and space were differentiated into the zones of habitation, industry, and commerce, separated from each other by circulation and greenbelts.

The construction of new housing areas went hand in hand with the construction of the entire infrastructure, including streets, lighting, and the sewage system (Figure 3.4).<sup>57</sup>

[Insert Figure 3.4 Here]

Figure 3.4 Playground in Pohjois-Haaga, Helsinki

Photo: Jorma Harju, 1961. Courtesy of Helsinki City Museum.

Suburbia included a plethora of spaces. Topographic town planning of the 1950s emphasized the intimate scale and harmony between buildings and the environment. With the 1960s, the scale of buildings and housing areas became larger, but the appearance more austere. The emphasis was on the contrast between buildings and the environment. Building companies, in close collaboration with banks, started to build entire housing areas. While the physical appearance of suburbs and buildings varied, the same functionalist dwelling type was repeated through the decades, with small variations. Only the number of bedrooms increased, from an average of one in the 1950s to two in the 1960s.<sup>58</sup>

The construction of suburbs aimed to provide affordable and decent housing for a large number of people. A great number of good-quality family homes were built relatively quickly: “modest modernism,” as Katja Lindroos has called it.<sup>59</sup> The aim of the Finnish housing policy that was also realized was to produce 500,000 new dwellings averaging 70 m<sup>2</sup> (750 sq. ft.) between 1966 and 1975. The program was comparable with the simultaneous Swedish Million Program discussed by Irene Molina in this volume. Serial production of similar dwelling and housing types fitted both with the goal of efficient construction and the epoch’s emphasis on equality. However, as the construction industry expanded, the distance between the opinions of planners and residents also grew. Homes became an industrially produced commodity.<sup>60</sup>

### 3 Modern Home, Environment, and Gender

The nuclear family and the welfare of children—the future citizens—were the cornerstone principles for designing new housing areas. New architectural thinking was characteristically utopian, but in a curious way. It aimed at the creation of a better future through the creation of better housing, but this future vision was stagnant. New homes were planned for the eternally young family consisting of a mother, father, and children who would never grow old. Although presented as classless, the new family model was based on urban middle-class ideals of family and gender. Most of the residents of new socially mixed suburbs were young middle- and working-class families with children (Figure 3.5).<sup>61</sup> Indeed, the nuclear family—as an ideal and practice—was never so widespread as it was in the 1950s and early 1960s, as Maria Mesner points out in this volume in the context of public urban housing in Vienna.

**[Insert Figure 3.5 Here]**

**Figure 3.5** Rowing a Boat in Kaukajärvi Suburb, Tampere

Photo: Matti Selänne 1968–1970. Courtesy of Vapriikki Photo Archives.

The planning of suburbs was based on the gendered idea of the organization of housing and society from indoors to outdoors, from the dwelling space to the zoning of urban space. Reproduction and recreation were articulated as the main functions of homes and suburbs alike, with the nuclear family and the husband-wife couple as its basic units. In the continuum of home and society, both genders had their complementary tasks according to the pre-war idea of dichotomous citizenship: the active housewife mother and the breadwinning father. Home and the nearby surroundings were defined as the spaces of women's and children's activities, and their planning was a shared concern of both female and male planners. The suburbs of the 1950s were planned with pedestrians in mind. The alliance of nature and physical activities—playing

children and active residents of all ages—dictated the layout and scale of the early suburbs. The residents' mobility—particularly the distance between homes and schools and the separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic—was a basis for planning. Habitation was ideally based on neighborhood units and their services, such as grocery stores, schools, kindergartens, libraries, churches, cinemas, playgrounds, sports fields, green areas, and public transport. Careful planning included plantings, common green areas, and the nearby environment, most notably in Tapiola Garden City.<sup>62</sup> From the 1960s on, services were often concentrated in larger suburban centers. Suburbanization and motorization accelerated each other. In the 1960s, both traffic and traffic separation became increasingly important factors of urban planning.<sup>63</sup>

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## Pleasures of Modern “Heavenly” Homes

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Extensive suburban construction brought the pleasures of the modern home—the provision of piped water, electricity, standardized kitchens, and domestic technology—within the reach of the masses. Modern amenities had a radical impact on the organization of daily life. Despite the modest size of the new apartments, relocation often marked a leap forward in living standards. A woman who moved to the suburbs as a child in 1965 wrote: “By eating soup, father and mother saved for a state-subsidized Arava home in Kontula. The studio flat changed into a three-room apartment.”<sup>64</sup> The ownership of a new suburban dwelling with a shiny kitchen and bathroom was experienced as an achievement requiring hard work and steady saving. Moving to an up-to-date apartment with “hot and cold running water” was recalled as being “a dream come true,” and contrasted with the previous inadequate homes. Likewise, a housewife who moved to the suburb of Pihlajamäki in 1965 was one of many women who recalled the new facilities as daily

miracles: “It was like arriving in heaven! We had our own apartment with two rooms and a kitchenette. We had a bathroom with hot water and our own balcony! And there was light and splendid views from the eighth floor.”<sup>65</sup>

Suburban dwellings, like veterans’ houses, adapted the pre-war Functionalist ideal of the unity of space and function. Residents were ideally located in separate rooms according to the functions of rooms and gendered tasks of family members. Despite similarities, there were small but significant differences between the two dwelling types in terms of spatial closeness and openness and connections between different rooms. Both stressed home as a space for a nuclear family with the mother as its key actor. Type-planned houses typically connected the kitchen (i.e., woman) with the bedroom (and children) and separated it from the living room (resting father), accentuating the woman’s two roles as a household worker and a mother. In suburban dwellings, the emphasis was on open, fluid spaces and the spatial continuum of kitchen, dining corner and living room with small bedrooms clearly separate. The living room with an adjacent dining corner was the largest space in the home, a place for dining, reading, school work, family togetherness, and socializing with guests, and from the 1960s on, watching TV.<sup>66</sup> Children’s play had entered suburban homes and housing discussions increasingly since the 1950s.

However, both in rural type-houses and smallish suburban homes, play often took place outdoors. Arrangements stressed the mother-child-family relations, the visibility of household work, and with the more distant bedroom(s), the privacy of family members and the intimacy between couples. Space and time intertwined when the “functionally differentiated woman” changed roles and places from household worker to mother and spouse according to the time of day, moving from the kitchen to living room to bedroom, as illustrated in the floor plans and numerous manuals for virtuous habitation (Figure 3.6).<sup>67</sup> The husband, in turn, had his place



resting in the living room armchair and implicitly in the bedroom of the married couple. Ideally there would have been separate bedrooms for the married couple and for children of different genders. This however, remained an unattainable ideal during the post-war decades. Small children were often located in a single bedroom, and living rooms used for sleeping.

**[Insert Figure 3.6 Here]**

**Figure 3.6** Woman Opening a Can in her Modern Suburban kitchen

Photo: Unknown, 1950s. Courtesy of Helsinki City Museum.

Open suburban spaces embodied the mother-child relationship from the placement of rooms inside the dwelling—kitchen-dining-living room axis—to the carefully thought-out relationship between home, yard, and surrounding environment. The emphasis on open spaces both indoors and outdoors set different areas of home life side by side. Open kitchens brought housework previously done in isolation into the social atmosphere of the family's shared spaces, and emphasized the connections between mothers and children. The mother, working in the kitchen, had visual and aural contact with the dining space and living room, where children played or did their homework. Suburban playgrounds for small children were located in the immediate vicinity of homes and were visible from living room and kitchen windows, making homes and yards extensions of each other. Schools, kindergartens, and shopping centers were within walking—or stroller—distance, whereas the sports fields of older children were located farther away.<sup>68</sup> The arrangement of the suburban environment, with zones gradually being distanced from homes, hence reflects the gradual separation of mother and child.

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## Gendered Suburban Criticism

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The passionate criticism of modernist town planning and suburban lifestyles began simultaneously with the most intense period of suburban construction in the mid-1960s. In the 1950s, the new suburban apartment represented success and was considered to be a means of change and liberation. By the late 1960s, suburbs were categorized as “dormitory towns” and sites of “mere residing”<sup>69</sup> and regarded more and more as the antitheses of freedom. Journalists, architects, and researchers criticized suburbs for their lack of social relationships and sense of community. They saw suburbanites and particularly women as prisoners of space and existing passively within their lives. As stated in the major Finnish newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* in an article from November 1, 1975:

The dullness of suburban life is visible in the idleness of afternoons. The green widow [a suburban housewife whose husband works in the city—Ed.] goes to the store with curlers in her hair and does the same thing the next day, the next week, and the next month. Endlessly, she feels.<sup>70</sup>

It appears that considerable—almost obsessive—expectations of an ideal neighborhood spirit were attached to the new suburbs. Compared with the central parts of the city, they were assumed to be places of a more communal nature conducive to closer social relations. Social networks did exist in the suburbs, but they were formed and transformed mainly by women and children. A woman who as a young mother in 1969 moved to Kontula, an eastern suburb of Helsinki, opposed the image of isolated and victimized suburbanites:

Surprise, surprise. We enjoyed living in Kontula right from the start. I soon realized that neighborly people lived in our building. In due course, there emerged a kind of agreement of mutual friendship and assistance, which gave everyone pleasure and benefit. It never became a burden. This was indeed a miracle,

because in the inner city, my husband and I didn't even know our neighbor on the same floor.<sup>71</sup>

The criticism failed to recognize the positive aspects of women's suburban socializing, and labeled it as just the "practice of gossiping" around the sandbox, regarding suburban social networks to be of lesser value than those of the traditional urban fabric.<sup>72</sup> For many women, semipublic suburban spaces outside the home were sites of informal daily encounters, neighborliness, and friendship (Figure 3.7). A mother who moved to Pihlajamäki in 1963 wrote:

Mothers socialized with each other next to the sand boxes. There was a good spirit of mutual assistance among the mothers—one could take turns and leave one's children in someone else's care if there were things to do in the city.<sup>73</sup>

**[Insert Figure 3.7 Here]**

**Figure 3.7** Shopping Center in Herttoniemi, Helsinki, Designed by Architect Eliel Muoniovaara (1956)

Photo: S. Salokangas, 1957. Courtesy of Helsinki City Museum.

It is apparent that the planning of the suburbs was based on a uniform housing model and a narrow view of domesticity and genders. The criticism of the suburbs, however, overlooked the agency of women, considering suburban women as "just housewives."<sup>74</sup> Suburbs were viewed from an outside perspective, often a male one, and were regarded as passive, reproductive, and feminine spaces of lesser value than active, productive, and masculine urban spaces. The criticism created parallel figures of the unhappy suburban housewife (the "green widow") and alienated man as an outsider (or visitor) in the suburban environment, both reinforcing the

connection between women and the domestic space and generating the idea of men as victims of that connection.<sup>75</sup>

The housewife had been both an ideal figure of suburban habitation and the target of suburban criticism since the late 1960s. The spread of the suburbs in the 1960s and 1970s took place simultaneously with the rupture of the ideal feminine identity. At the beginning of the 1970s, women's magazines and newspapers moved away from the discourse of the active housewife. The tune of the discussion changed rapidly. The cultural identity of the active and practical housewife was replaced by the wage-earning mother, who skillfully and efficiently combined motherhood and housework with work outside the home.<sup>76</sup>

The image of the new suburbs as realms of the housewives who lived there was oversimplified. During the early years, much construction work took place in the suburbs, bringing people—mostly men—to work there. Moreover, not all the recollections were positive; some were ambivalent, and a few were overtly negative, expressing the sense of isolation in the suburban “penal colony.”<sup>77</sup> There also existed a contradiction of praxis and ideals. Whereas the post-war decades were characterized by home culture and the housewife ideal, the institution of housewifery never held sway on a large scale in Finland, whose industrialization and urbanization occurred at a relatively late stage but very rapidly. The number of married urban women working outside the home was quite high after World War II; indeed it was the highest of all Western countries, and continued to increase after the war. During the war, 31% of women worked outside the home; by 1950, 34% of married women living in towns worked outside the home, increasing to 45% in 1960 and 57% in 1970. Differences with other Western countries diminished during the 1960s. While many suburban mothers of small children were housewives working at home, some worked outside the home. Moreover, many women worked from home

on a part-time basis, for example in bookkeeping, cleaning, or childcare.<sup>78</sup> This work, however, is not reflected well in the statistics. Mothers often went back to work when their children started school, following the new ideal of consecutive roles and phases of married women's lives advocated by Swedes Alva Myrdal and Viola Klein that replaced the earlier ideal of the complementary couple.<sup>79</sup>

Women's reminiscences of suburban life also voiced confusion, as their lifestyle, only recently valued, came to be viewed as suspect. By pointing out the drawbacks of the lifestyle of suburban housewives, the criticism created tensions among women. These tensions also seem to have been class-based: educated working women criticized less educated women for staying at home. Married suburban women from all classes increasingly went to work outside the home during the 1960s, but more often, it was middle-class rather than working-class women working outside the home.<sup>80</sup>

In the written accounts, suburban women referred themselves as "home mothers" (*kotiäiti*), not "housewives" (*kotirouva*), emphasizing their tasks as active caregivers, as Lena Marander-Eklund also demonstrates in her ethnographic study of Finnish housewives of the 1950s. Terms frequently used in the post-war housing discussions were *perheenemäntä* (literally "family household manager"), with reference to rural traditions, and *perheenäiti* (family mother), with urban middle-class connotations. Post-war Finland was dominated by rural habitation and had a relatively small middle class. The division of labor in rural households was based more on a sliding scale of women's and men's tasks than a sharp opposition., Women, however were more flexible in crossing borders than men.<sup>81</sup>

Despite the new modern conveniences, managing everyday life in the new suburban homes was a time-consuming task. Gendered daily habits dividing housework into men's and

women's tasks changed slowly. Double burdens—furthered by a cultural appreciation of hardworking, strong women—was the daily experience of many working mothers. Gender equality, day care problems, division of household work within the family, and the critique of family-centered living entered into the social discourses of the late 1960s. The feminist Association 9 (*Yhdistys 9*) was established in 1966. However, the relationship between housing and gender was not directly discussed.

Much suburban criticism was written within a modernist framework that valued movement and the unfamiliar: meaningful life took place outside suburban domesticity. The shift of focus from the perspective of the planners and outside observers to the lived suburban spaces made room for inhabitants' multiple spatial practices. At the level of societal planning, women were located in the domestic suburban space, which they shaped and reshaped through their daily activities. When suburban criticism observed suburbia from a bird's-eye view, and the outside perspectives of criticism or planning concentrated on the built environment, life in the suburbs looked static and determined, with limited opportunities for residents' agency. The inhabitants' accounts, instead, approached suburbs through situational mundane experiences. In the narratives, the suburban environment opens up as a locus of activities. The suburban landscape, its topography, and architecture take shape through use and mobility. New dwellings were sources of pride and joy. Moreover, habitation extended to the surrounding environments, forests, and wastelands outside the scope of an all-encompassing planning, as discussed more thoroughly elsewhere. Residents compared themselves to settlers in the unfinished suburban surroundings. Natural environments formed the flip side of architecture, providing secret hiding places to make into one's own, and creating parallel spaces and aesthetic and experiential diversity to the suburban landscape.<sup>82</sup> Life in the suburbs was not just one, but was many things.

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## The New Everyday Life in the 1980s and 1990s

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The criticism of modern universal housing and town planning principles as suitable for all individuals in all locations began in the US in the early 1960s. While intense discussions were also initiated in Finland—a model country of architectural modernism—modernist housing and town planning principles were persistent. Key targets of Finnish criticism were the demolition of old historical architecture and the depopulation of urban centers, and the supposedly passive and isolated lifestyle of housewives in suburban dormitory towns. As the scattered layout of forest suburbs of the 1950s was regarded as unsuitable for creating social relations, expectations were put on the new ideal of dense, “compact town suburbs.”<sup>83</sup>

Finnish women were among the first to enter the architectural profession in the 1890s, and *Architecta*, the Finnish Association of Women Architects, was founded in 1942, furthering women’s position and visibility in the architectural profession.<sup>84</sup> However, feminist and postmodern approaches entered Finnish architectural discussions relatively late in the 1980s. Feminist planners and activists focused a new kind of attention on the agency of inhabitants. They pointed out the distance between the modern town planning machinery and residents, challenged the uniform housing model as the basis of planning, underlined the importance of diverse housing solutions, and developed participatory planning practices. Their emphasis on the daily environment continued the viewpoints of practical material feminists as well as the implicit connections between women, children, and the housing environment.

The work of “The New Everyday Life” group, a decade-long transdisciplinary women’s group active in the 1980s and 1990s, is an example of feminist perspectives for community planning. In the early 1980s, the Nordic “Housing and Building on Women’s Terms” group

started to criticize modern town planning and its spatial separation of housing from work and other activities. The movement, inspired by the Nordic interpretation of Robert Owen and Charles Fourier's social utopian tradition, material feminists, and Patrick Geddes, John Turner, and Margaret Kennedy, sought to create alternatives to industrial and market-oriented urban development.<sup>85</sup> In the spirit of US material feminists, the movement provided a critique of the difficult conditions in the balance of work and private life, a vision of a just society, and a model of action.<sup>86</sup>

The vision of The New Everyday Life group was a concrete utopia of a post-industrial, mosaic-like society consisting of varying self-governing units that would be responsible for the use of local resources. Important elements were work (paid and unpaid), care, and housing; instead of being separated, these three elements were to be integrated into the living environment. The central motives for action were the needs of children and women, as well as the social reproduction of people and nature, which would be enhanced by the so-called supportive infrastructure of everyday life.

The model of action proposed was based on the building of an "intermediary level," a mediating structure between individual households and the public and private sectors, which would enable the reorganization and integration of housing, work, and care in the neighborhoods. As a new structure in the neighborhoods, the intermediary level was also to include environmentally friendly housing, services, employment, and other activities, which would support the residents irrespective of age and gender.<sup>87</sup> The functional basis of the intermediary level would be created by bringing to the neighborhood some of the daily tasks normally located in other sectors and places. The care of domestic chores and children could be transferred from private homes to communal spaces, as in the examples of cohousing. Environmental planning



and management, as well as the care of older people, would be provided in the neighborhood and not in the centralized institutions of the public sector. These transactions were to result in new activities, called the local housework, local care, local production, and local planning and management.<sup>88</sup>

As a geographical phenomenon, the intermediary level was to be a locally limited territorial whole, varying in size from a group of dwellings or a block, to a neighborhood, village, or part of a town. As a physical phenomenon, it was to include shared arenas and spaces of communication. Its architecture would support different modes of housing and the identity of the local culture. It could be regarded as a mixture of New Urbanism<sup>89</sup> and the Just City.<sup>90</sup>

The applications of The New Everyday Life approach can be structured according to the level of aspired communality and the degree of informal/formal economy. This has resulted in a range of examples, such as a well-functioning housing area with shared spaces. These include the neighborhood of Tinggaarden outside Copenhagen; cohousing communities or collective houses, especially in Denmark and Sweden; communes of different sizes, particularly among Nordic students; service house communities with both cohousing and an exchange of unpaid and paid services in all Nordic countries; and lastly, communities in which members work in the residence in which they live, such as Svaneholm in Denmark, kibbutzim in Israel, and the eco-village Findhorn in Scotland.

The movement in Finland founded a non-governmental organization (NGO) comprising some 50 women interested in housing and planning issues. In the 1990s, the network was supported by the Ministry of the Environment, which enabled the arrangement of regional events, such as the international Gender and Human Settlement Network, and a conference with 300 participants in Hämeenlinna. The core group was invited to write the Participation paragraph

in the new Land Use and Building Act that was enacted in force in 2000. The focus was mostly on spatial development issues, such as the participatory processes in zoning, the content of the plans stressing the integration of care and work, mobility, safety, and short distances to services in housing areas. The New Everyday Life approach has been applied since the 1990s in a number of gender-aware neighborhood improvements in various European countries, including Malminkartano, Helsinki, in Finland.<sup>91</sup>

The turn of the millennium has also witnessed various solutions for housing cooperatives that deviate from the prevalent family-centered idea of habitation. The long tradition of self-built housing, as described in the veterans' houses of the 1950s, has continued in the form of experiments on collaborative self-planning projects. *Loppukiri* ("The Final Sprint," 2000–2003) for people aged over 50 and *Malta House* for mixed ages (2013) in Helsinki are examples of novel types of cohousing projects in which residents manage planning. In addition to individually planned apartments that are smaller than those in basic multifamily houses, houses have shared spaces (over 20%) for dining, hobbies, and saunas (Figure 3.8).<sup>92</sup> In the earlier collective housing solutions, paid staff provided services, whereas the new modes of cohousing rely on residents' participation and the exchange of unpaid services. While the co-construction of gender identities in dwelling takes place through action in time and space, it is, however, culturally dependent on who spends time, where, how, and why.<sup>93</sup> The participatory housing planning practices tend to increase the residential satisfaction and inhabitant-environment fit, but they also tend to reproduce the existing practices of habitation and gender. However, it seems that the collective organization of activities in the less private and more shared semipublic and public spaces of cohouses furthers the sharing of tasks and is more flexible, and more equal gender contracts expand gendered daily habits.<sup>94</sup>

[Insert Figure 3.8 Here]

**Figure 3.8** *Malta Cohousing Project* Commissioned by Its Residents (ARK-house Architects), Jätkäsaari, Helsinki, 2013

Photo: Heljä Herranen, 2014.

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## Interrelationships of Gender, Modernities, and Housing

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Gender, modernity, and housing have been interrelated at several levels in post-war Finland, from the ideals and practices of planning to the lived domestic spaces. The positive and negative effects of the environment on residents, and the welfare of women and children, have motivated the formation of modern housing environments since the late nineteenth century. Women professionals (architects, home economists, interior and garden designers) played an early and crucial role in the reshaping of dwelling spaces according to the new ideals of rationalized housework and functional spatial differentiation outlined in the 1920s and 1930s, and they shaped new housing environments alongside their male colleagues. The construction of type-planned veterans' houses and suburban neighborhoods after World War II efficiently disseminated the modern, urban, middle-class ideals of spatially differentiated, practical dwellings for the daily life of numerous Finns. Both indoors and outdoors, new domestic environments embodied the gendered spatial organization of daily life and society along the new ideals of the nuclear family and the complementary, gendered division of labor between practical, active housewives and breadwinning fathers. Whereas women's activities were valued, domestic environments were simultaneously identified as women's spheres of action. Modern

dwellings had a radical impact on the residents' lives. For many residents, new spacious dwellings with their modern amenities symbolized achievements, and were praised by women in particular.

As the “green widow”—the isolated, idle housewife—or as the idealized efficient housewife and mother, the housewife was a key figure both in the suburban ideology of the 1950s and in the suburban criticism starting in the mid-1960s. Although it pointed out the drawbacks of suburban life, the criticism deeply undervalued suburbs and suburbanites. It was often written from the perspective of middle-class, mostly male outside experts, and was both gender and class biased. The chain of the concepts of women, children, home, and suburbs were thus attached to each other, while the reproductive, domestic, and suburban spaces became detached from the more valuable productive, public, urban spaces. Suburbanites' recollections, however, point out women's agency in suburban life, both in the labor and affective “home work”<sup>95</sup> that were needed to produce the place called home, and in the suburban social relationships that critics failed to recognize.

Since the 1980s and 1990s, feminist planners and activists have outlined alternatives for persistent modernist dwelling and town planning ideals, such as various cohousing and participatory planning initiatives. Moreover, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, urbanites' various hands-on activities, pop-up events (restaurant day, cleaning day, sauna day), and novel types of urban agriculture, together with self-organized housing movements and neighborhood groups from suburbs to city center, have gained popularity in Finland as elsewhere, often facilitated by increasing use of information and communication technology. They stress urbanites' rights to use and shape cities, instead of relying on the predesigned and fixed activities of top-down planning. Women are particularly active in new the pop-up culture—

often 70%–80% of the participants are women of varying ages.<sup>96</sup> However, the focus of interest no longer lies in the care of children and the balancing of domestic and work life, but rather on the varieties of urban “buzz.”

The combination of various perspectives of planners, developers, journalists, activists, and inhabitants allows a more nuanced view of gender, housing environments, and modernity. Instead of the dichotomy between active planners as creators of the built environment and inhabitants as passive users, for whom the environment is planned, the shaping of the environment and its meanings is a much more complex process. Even if inhabitants learn to live with what they have, they too shape their environment and its meanings in conjunction with planners. Between the extremes of actively designing and passively consuming space, a range of ways exists to use and shape the environment and its meanings. Built spaces and their meanings are formed in the interplay of humans and their environment, in the reciprocity of planners, inhabitants, objects and things, past and present cultural conventions and practices, artificial and natural processes, and stable and moving human and nonhuman environmental elements.<sup>97</sup> Along with socially planned or unplanned features, the “naturally unplanned”<sup>98</sup> features, such as weather, seasons, and use, also mold the environment. Therefore, built spaces and their meanings are not static, completed constructions but are dynamic processes. The formation of built spaces continues after their planning and construction, which means that they change over time and are also open to the future. The relations between inhabitants and their environment are reciprocal. Even if spatial arrangements and cultural conceptions and agreements define the use of space, and support—or interfere with—gendered spatial habits and practices, they do not determine the activities of the inhabitants, who both shape their environment and are shaped by it.

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## Archives

[Elämä](#) lähiöissä (Life in the Suburbs), written memories in *Helsingin Sanomat* collection.

Helsinki City Archives, Helsinki.

Kirsi Saarikangas's work on this chapter took place under the auspices of the Academy of Finland research project number 278008 at the University of Helsinki; ORCID ID: 0000-0003-3370-2941.

1 [Åström 1999](#), 105–6.

2 A large body of written personal recollections of suburban life in the Helsinki region from the 1950s to the 1970s was collected between 1995 and 2000. The largest collection of such memoirs, titled “Life in the Suburbs” (*Elämää lähiöissä*), was amassed by the newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* from 1995–1996 (Helsinki City Archives). It contains over 200 stories from over 40 different suburbs. The competitions organized by the Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literature Society (SKS, 1999–2000) drew 82 entrants from the neighborhoods of Kontula and Siilitie, and the competition “Helsinki as a Living Environment” (*Helsinki elämänympäristönä*) arranged by ethnologist Anna-Maria Åström in 1995 drew 182 entrants, 34 of them about suburbs.

3 With the local Finnish variations, the development parallels state-sponsored housing programs after World War II in several other countries, among them Britain and the Federal Republic of Germany.

4 [Juntto 1990](#), 228–9.

5 Finnish housing stock is indeed literally modern: 90% was built after 1920, and in 1980 over 80% had been built from the 1940s to the 1970s. [Juntto 1990](#), 408; [Mäkiö 1994](#), 15.

6 [Saarikangas 2014](#), 41–3.

7 [Sulkunen 1987](#), 171–2; [Hirdman 1989](#), 96.

8 [Young 1997](#), 162.

9 [Iokinen 2005](#), 50–1.

10 [Giles 2004](#), 4.

11 [Felski 2000](#), 26.

- 12 Susan E. Reid discusses modernism's gendered antipathy for domesticity in the context of "communist comfort" in this volume.
- 13 [McLeod 1996](#), 20–4; [Young 1997](#), 156–60; [Ahmed, Castañeda, Fortier, and Sheller 2003](#), 1–19; [Heynen 2005](#), 1–3; [Johansson and Saarikangas 2009](#), 12–16; [Fraiman 2017](#), 3.
- 14 Early examples include [Wright 1981](#); [Eleb-Vidal and Debarre-Blanchard 1989](#); [Colomina 1992](#); [Saarikangas 1993](#). The thorough discussion of the relationship of dwelling and modern architecture by Hilde [Heynen \(1999\)](#) skips gender.
- 15 [Wolff 1985](#); [Pollock 1988](#).
- 16 [Domosh and Seager 2001](#), 5.
- 17 [Saarikangas 2002](#), 158–64; [Spain 2014](#), 583–4.
- 18 [Wilson 1991](#), 10.
- 19 [Ruckenstein 2009](#), 239–41; [Domosh and Seager 2001](#), 34.
- 20 [Saarikangas 1993](#), 43–8; [Massey 1994](#), 167–71; [Johansson and Saarikangas 2009](#).
- 21 [Hartley 1997](#); [Spigel 2001](#); [Giles 2004](#); [Hapgood 2005](#); [Saarikangas 2014](#). See also [Saegert 1980](#).
- 22 [de Certeau 1980](#), 139–42, 173–4; [Colomina 1992](#); [Massey 2005](#); [Saarikangas 2010](#); [Saarikangas 2013](#), 31–2. The writings of Michel de Certeau, Michel Foucault, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Henri Lefebvre, among others, have been crucial for the rich field of inquiry.
- 23 [Berman 1988](#), 16; [Giles 2004](#), 4–6. In relation to modern architecture, terms are thoroughly discussed by [Heynen 1999](#), 8–25.
- 24 [Kaika 2005](#), 6.
- 25 [Henket 2002](#), 9.



- 26 [Berman 1988](#), 15–16.
- 27 O'Shea 1996, 11.
- 28 [Saarikangas 1993](#), 142; [Saarikangas 2002](#), 46–7; [Heynen 2005](#), 15–20.
- 29 [Kalha 2000](#).
- 30 [Saarikangas 2002](#), 44–6; [Mattila 2006](#), 133.
- 31 [Nilsson 1994](#), 198; [Gandy 2006](#), 14.
- 32 Gandy 2002, 5–7; [Kaika 2005](#), 6.
- 33 [Saarikangas 1993](#), 144–9; [Heynen 1999](#), 43–50.
- 34 [Aalto 1930](#), 83.
- 35 The industrial town Tampere had a local type of wooden, multi-family, worker housing in which one-room dwellings surrounded a shared kitchen; see [Saarikangas 1993](#), 175.
- 36 [Saarikangas 2002](#), 202–8.
- 37 [Hayden 1981](#), 183–4.
- 38 [Lagerborg-Stenius 1921](#), 25.
- 39 [Saarikangas 2006](#), 161–2; [Saarikangas 2009a](#), 289–94.
- 40 [Fraiman 2017](#), 12.
- 41 [Setälä 1931](#), 14.
- 42 [Henderson 1996](#), 245–6; [Saarikangas 2006](#), 163–5.
- 43 [Saarikangas 2002](#), 49; [Saarikangas 2009a](#), 286–91.
- 44 [Saarikangas 1993](#), 341–53.
- 45 [Colomina 1994](#), 9.
- 46 [Saarikangas 1993](#), 43–8; [Massey 1994](#), 164; [Johansson and Saarikangas 2009](#).
- 47 [Juntto 1990](#), 228–9, 408.

- 48 [Saarikangas 1993](#), 84–9, 264–71; [Saarikangas 2009a](#), 295–7; [Palomäki 2011](#).
- 49 [Frampton 1983](#).
- 50 [Simberg 1945](#), 72–3; [Saarikangas 1993](#), 358–9; [Saarikangas 2009a](#), 295–301.
- 51 [Stigell 1939](#), 49.
- 52 [Harmaja 1939](#), 744.
- 53 [Lappi-Seppälä 1945](#), 72–3.
- 54 [Saarikangas 2009a](#), 293–4.
- 55 [Heininen-Blomstedt 2013](#), 91.
- 56 [Juntto 1990](#), 228–9. In the 1970s and 1980s, attention turned again to the urban centers. In addition to suburbs, new housing was constructed in single-family house neighborhoods, former industrial waterfronts, and intermediate areas, resulting a more continuous urban fabric.
- 57 [Saarikangas 2014](#), 41–3.
- 58 In the 1950s suburban homes were 50 m<sup>2</sup> (540 sq. ft.), in the 1960s 60 m<sup>2</sup> (650 sq. ft.). [Juntto 1990](#), 233; [Mäkiö 1994](#), 14–15.
- 59 [Lindroos 2013](#).
- 60 [Juntto 1990](#), 275.
- 61 [Saarikangas 2014](#), 44.
- 62 [Hertzen 1946](#) and [Meurman 1947](#) were the most important books disseminating suburban ideology. See [Saarikangas 2014](#).
- 63 [Herranen 1997](#), 491–3.
- 64 “Life in the Suburbs” 1995, 72.
- 65 “Life in the Suburbs” 1995, 45.

66 [Saarikangas 2014](#), 47–8; [Spain 1992](#), 13; [Attfield 1999](#), 96.

67 For example [Stigell 1945](#).

68 [Meurman 1947](#), 78–9.

69 [Roivainen 1999](#), 60.

70 *Helsingin Sanomat* November 1, 1975.

71 “Life in the Suburbs” 1995, 76.

72 [Kortteinen 1982](#), 79–80; [Jokinen 1996](#), 183.

73 “Life in the Suburbs” 1995, 39.

74 Matthews 1987, xiii.

75 [Saarikangas 2014](#), 51–5.

76 [Jokinen 2009](#), 361.

77 “Life in the Suburbs” 1995, 29.

78 Moreover, in Finland women did not give up their jobs after the war, as was the general trend in many countries. See [Iallmoja 1985](#), 256; [Saarikangas 1993](#), 361–2; [Salmi 2009](#), 170–1; [Marander-Eklund 2014](#), 58–65. Women were often employed in the growing public sector and public spaces of care.

79 [Myrdal and Klein 1956](#).

80 [Salmi 2009](#), 171.

81 [Marander-Eklund 2014](#), 50–4. The Finnish *perheenemäntä* does not have an English equivalent. It refers to the active and productive aspects of home economics in the rural society; *emäntä* meant household manager. *Kotirouva* (housewife) became more common in the 1960s but had a critical tone, while *kotiäiti* (homemother) had more positive connotations for the women themselves.

- 82 [Saarikangas 2013](#); [Saarikangas 2014](#).
- 83 [Saarikangas 2014](#), 38.
- 84 [Suominen-Kokkonen 1992](#), 9–11.
- 85 [Horelli and Vepsä 1994](#).
- 86 [Hayden 1981](#).
- 87 [Horelli and Vepsä 1994](#).
- 88 [The Research Group for the New Everyday Life 1991](#); [Gilroy and Booth 1999](#).
- 89 In the sense that it stressed community building with small-scale architectural means and participatory processes by women and men.
- 90 [Fainstein 2010](#).
- 91 [Sanchez de Madariaga and Roberts 2013](#).
- 92 [Saarikangas 2009b](#).
- 93 [Horelli 1995](#).
- 94 [Horelli and Vepsä 1994](#); [Vestbro and Horelli 2012](#).
- 95 [Young 1997](#), 162.
- 96 [Horelli, Saad-Suloinen, Wallin, and Botero 2015](#).
- 97 [Latour 2007](#), 32–3.
- 98 [von Bonsdorff 2005](#), 73–4.